

July 3, 2007

Mr. Ivan DeLoatch
Staff Director
Federal Geographic Data Committee
590 National Center
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Mr. DeLoatch:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of GITA, I am pleased to provide this letter of endorsement and support for the US National Grid, a Federal Geographic Data Committee-endorsed standard that is being promoted in order to create a more favorable environment for developing location-based services within the United States and to increase the interoperability of location services with printed map products.

As a user friendly, nationally consistent language of location optimized for local applications, it does not require users to change how their data is digitally stored, as in latitude and longitude degrees-decimal-degrees, for example. Instead, its use facilitates new functions and capabilities previously unavailable.

The US National Grid enables the concept of a universal map index, similar to how a community uses only a standard set of names for its streets. Beyond its use in describing street and feature locations on paper maps depicting a full fine line USNG grid, USNG map index values are directly usable with Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and other digital technology. As a globally extent consensus based standard, it reduces training and other costs as well as operational friction between and among organizations. These capabilities can be particularly important to those geospatial professionals, as represented by GITA members and constituents, with a vested interest in operating, maintaining and protecting the nation's infrastructure.

For example, the US National Grid has proven to be of significant value in meeting emergency response and address/parcel identification requirements, serving in part as a bridge between analog (paper maps) and digital applications. This can be a particularly critical function in the aftermath of a natural or other disaster, as when the street sign infrastructure of coastal Mississippi was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Accordingly, given the significant benefits adoption and use of the US National Grid would provide, the Board of Directors of the Geospatial Information & Technology Association (GITA) endorses and strongly encourages the appropriate implementation and use of the Federal Geographic Data Committee US National Grid standard by its members and others.

In addition, the GITA Board of Directors:

- supports the US National Grid (USNG) as a nationally consistent grid reference system and as the preferred grid for National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) applications;
- believes that other geospatial reference systems must also be standardized and available for application and use, but strongly supports the USNG as a seamless, common reference system for emergency management;
- recommends widespread awareness, training and education on the use of the USNG for first responders nation-wide; and
- supports consideration by the ANSI/INCITS Technical Committee L1 of adoption of the USNG as an American National Standard.

We will continue to encourage GITA members to list their implementations and lessons learned on the website provided by FGDC (www.fgdc.gov/usng) and also encourage wide distribution of the "White Paper" prepared by the National States Geographic Information Council, dated August 3, 2006, that cites a number of the values and benefits of the US National Grid.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue on behalf of the constituents of GITA and the people and infrastructure-based institutions that they serve.

Yours sincerely,



Robert M. Samborski
Executive Director

c: Richard Hogan, Director, EROS Center, USGS
Tom Terry, US Marine Corps, Geospatial Planning and Policy Branch